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## OPEN DISCUSSION

HON. P. S. SCANLON, Mayor of Huntingdon, West Virginia:

We were one of the people that first adopted the commission form of government. But I must tell you before I go into the subject who we are and what we have. We have a little city of only about 50,000. That city we have built up in less years than I am old. In forty-two years we have built up at Huntingdon, West Virginia, a little city of 50,000 people; we have 65 miles of paved streets; we have a splendid sewage system; we have a city building and grounds worth \$400,000; we have splendid public streets and general utilities of all kinds that we must have as a municipal corporation, but we are not interested in any of the regular public utilities arrangements.

The reason we are not, I can frankly say to you, is that we have been too busy building up a great city to look after the things that all of the people must have established, rather than a portion of the people.

We do not own our water works; we do not own our street railways; we do not own our lighting plants; and we own no public service arrangements. They are all owned by private individuals or private corporations.

We have four commissioners. One is the commissioner of police and fire; one is the commissioner of health and charities; one is the commissioner of streets and public grounds; the other is the commissioner of finance and public utilities. In this case that happens to be myself. The advantage of a commission like this, governing a city, that has to do with public utilities matters, is that the power is narrowed down; the responsibility is upon four men. These four commissioners make the laws, they execute the laws; they appoint every other officer in the city: they are the only people elected. The responsibility is narrowed down until they have to be good, no matter whether they want to be or not, because you can put your finger upon the number in a very few moments if anything goes wrong.

I said that we had a commissioner of finance and public utilities, and we get closer to our public utilities corporations than the ordi-

nary city that is governed by a council, a large body of men, because we do not send a man down to see the public utilities management, somebody that has been appointed by somebody or elected by the people; we send down the commissioner of public utilities elected himself by the people, who is the government really; he is a part of the government that is narrowed down to such a small compass that it is really the government dealing the public service corporations. That commissioner of public utilities walks in the front door, and asks them for any information, or why the public do not have better service in this, that or the other direction. It is the government itself, I say.

We have no powers as a city commission, with the public service corporation, only as I said a while ago, as the representatives of the community, for we are the representatives of the community.

We have appointed by our legislature, and provided for by a statute law, a public service commission, and we may deal as the representatives of a community, with public service organizations, through this public service commission, and we are dealing as the absolute government every time that we deal. We find that in a good many instances where people complain of municipal utilities that they are not always wrong. Public service corporations are not always corporations that are dangerous to the public interests and the public good. We have found in Huntingdon, where we have grown so fast a city of 50,000 in forty-two years, that we have gotten great service out of the public service corporations in a great many instances and we are fairly well satisfied today.

The time is coming, however, when we are going to own some of the public service utilities. We are treading in that direction. We do not believe that it is necessary to be too rapid about it. We do not care to take over our telephone system; we do not know that we will ever take over our street railway system; we do not know that we will ever attempt to supply the public with gas, and fuel and that sort of thing. We do believe that the community ought to own their waterworks when it gets to a point that it can supply the people at a more reasonable price, at a price that will take care of the expense and finally wipe out the cost of the building.

We believe, too, that it is absolutely necessary that we should probably own our lighting plants, when the proper time comes, not because, my friends, we feel we have corporations among us

supplying that light and water and other necessities that are dishonest and that are wrong, but we find it is better for the community that some of these things should be owned by the community.

I think the advantage obtained through the commission form of government is by the fact that we get so close to these corporations and because we know what they mean. We tell them what they must do, and they do it. We have no representatives of any particular quarter of our city in our government; the four men are elected by all the people of the city; each one is elected by all the people; we have no man elected from this corner to represent that corner or the other corner; we are all United States senators, you know, we are elected by the whole city, and I believe, my friends, that the commission form of government, especially for cities up to 100,000 or 200,000 population, is the greatest thing that ever struck this country.

MR. ANDREW J. GALLAGHER, Delegate from San Francisco, California:

I did not intend to address the gathering, rather have I been sitting here as a very interested spectator.

In relation to the subject which we have under consideration, namely, the public policies as to municipal utilities, may I be permitted to say that experience along the lines of regulation of these utilities has made me an ardent enthusiast for municipal ownership, first, last and all the time?

I have come to the belief that the problem you are discussing here is one which the people will take into their own hands ere long, because of the apparent inability of corporations either to deal honestly by them, or to properly regulate them, and because of the increased belief among people that the best interests of a community are conserved by people owning and operating their utilities.

There is, after all, one great danger, in municipal ownership, and that is the subject of political control and manipulation. I take it that the human mind is big enough to easily master that problem. As a matter of fact, remove politics as we know it and see it operated from the field of utility operation, and the public cannot possibly suffer by municipal ownership. The public service corporations have had every possible opportunity to make friends with the people generally and have failed to do so. In fact now

that the public mind is moving toward acquisition, control and operation of these utilities, there is a frantic endeavor to make friends with the people. But this effort has been made too late, by men who should have known better. The public has, I think, finally made up its mind that the only solution is public ownership. With that principle I am in hearty accord. I am one of those pledged in my own city to bring it about as speedily as possible.

I thank you very much for your attention and for the honor conferred upon me in permitting me to address you. I convey to you the well-wishes of the Mayor and the people of San Francisco.

During the Friday morning session, Mayor Blankenburg proposed the following telegram to be sent to the governors of the states, assembled in their annual convention at Madison, Wisconsin. The telegram was unanimously adopted and ordered sent:

November 13, 1914.

CONFERENCE OF GOVERNORS,  
Madison, Wisconsin.

The mayors of American cities, in convention assembled in Philadelphia for the discussion of public policies as to the municipal utilities, send greetings to the governors of the states, assembled in their annual convention for deliberation, among other matters, on the conservation of natural and human resources. The citizens of the United States are to be congratulated upon the fact that at this time of World-War, American city and state executives can peacefully gather for deliberation upon such subjects as conservation of our resources, the protection of our citizens, and proper public policies regarding municipal utilities, affecting as they do the stability of over ten billion dollars of capital and the personal daily welfare and efficiency of over sixty million urban and suburban residents. May public policies on all these questions be ever such as will at once conserve moneys actually invested, further industrial development, reserve to cities adequate powers, and protect the best interests of the rank and file of American citizens.

RUDOLPH BLANKENBURG, *Presiding.*

During the next day the following telegram was received:

Milwaukee, Wis., November 14, 1914.

CONVENTION OF MAYORS,

Care of Mayor Blankenburg, Philadelphia, Pa.

Your telegram received with much appreciation. The governors assembled send greetings and wish you a most successful meeting.

FRANCIS E. MCGOVERN,  
Governor of Wisconsin,  
*Chairman, Executive Committee.*